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STATEMENT ON THE DETENTION OF OYUB TITIEV,
HEAD OF MEMORIAL OFFICE IN CHECHNYA

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 15 March 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Norway made a statement on 18 January this year about the arrest on 9 January of human rights defender Oyub Titiev, head of Memorial's office in Grozny, after marihuana was supposedly found in his car.

On 6 March his detention was extended to 9 May 2018. Mr. Titiev continues to deny all charges made against him, and claims that police officers of the Kurchaloyevskiy district of the Chechen Republic planted the marihuana that has been presented as proof of his guilt. The Investigative Committee of Russia in the Chechen Republic has reportedly declined to open a criminal investigation against these police officers.

Chechnya has a track record of serious human rights violations, and we believe there is good reason to doubt the veracity of the charges made against Mr. Titiev. We therefore once again call on the Russian federal authorities to investigate the veracity of the charges made against Mr. Titiev promptly and to secure his right to a fair trial. Furthermore, we urge them to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Mr. Titiev and his family.

Human rights defenders are at risk in many places, not least in Chechnya and other parts of the North-Caucasus. It is extremely difficult for human rights organisations to operate in this area. Nevertheless, there are brave people who despite personal risk continue to fight for the rights of citizens who suffer human rights abuses. We encourage Russia to acknowledge the value of the work done by members of such organisations as Memorial and to protect them when they face threats, violence and injustice.

All countries, not least Participating States of the OSCE, have an obligation to protect human rights defenders so that they can fulfil their important task. The unanimous adoption in November 2017 of the UN General Assembly of a Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, is an unquestionable expression of this commitment.